

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

June 3, 1999

Projects Reviewed

Convened: 8:00am

SDC Retreat 1999

S.E.A. Streets

Neighborhood Plans: Aurora-Licton, Broadview Haller Lake, North District

Merrill Gardens

Pritchard Wetlands Restoration Project

Adjourned: 4:30pm

Commissioners Present

Rick Sundberg, chair

Moe Batra

Gail Dubrow

Robert Foley

Jeff Girvin

Gerald Hansmire

Jon Layzer

Peter Miller

Staff Present

John Rahaim

Peter Aylsworth

Rebecca Walls

060399.1 Project: **Seattle Design Commission Retreat 1999**
 Time: 4 hr

The Design Commission held its annual retreat to discuss the 1999/2000 work plan and the direction of the new Design Center. The retreat was divided into two half-day sessions. Information and outcomes of the retreat will be compiled after the this session.

060399.2 Project: **Commission Business**

Action Items:

- A. MINUTES OF THE MAY 20TH MEETING: Approved as amended.

Discussion Items:

- B. LIGHT RAIL REVIEW PANEL UPDATE: The LRRP will have its first retreat to discuss and compare the various projects reviewed to date.
- C. PROJECT UPDATES: The Arboretum Lakeside Trail project may never being completed. The final EIS was completed based on years of study and support. It was a SPIF priority project, but for unknown reasons is now on hold.
- D. CIVIC CENTER MASTER PLAN: The Civic Center Master Plan was approved by City Council on May 24th.
- E. PUBLIC FORUM JUNE 24TH: The “Design Center” forum will be held on June 24th in the Dome Room, Alaska Building, from 5pm to 7pm.
- F. INTER-DEPARTMENTAL TEAM MEETING JUNE 15TH: The Seattle “Design Center” will host an inter-departmental team meeting on June 15th to discuss the upcoming forum and other issues regarding the newly created “Design Center.”

- Foley:** Will the demonstration project provide information regarding the level of implementation necessary for improvements to work?
- Arnesen:** Yes. We will measure the water levels and dissipation times before and after the project is completed.
- Foley:** Will the S.E.A. Streets program become a usable alternative to standard street improvements for new developments.
- Arnesen:** There has been an interest in this program as an alternative for new development. The future of the program will depend on the success of the demonstration project.
- Girvin:** Will the project be designed by Seattle Transportation staff or outside consultants?
- Arnesen:** Seattle Transportation will design the street and the landscaping, Seattle Public Utilities will design the drainage system.
- Foley:** I appreciate that Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle Transportation are addressing this problem.
- Sundberg:** This program will require significant collaboration between City agencies.
- Action:** **The Commission appreciates the briefing and requests a presentation of the program once the streetscape designs have been further developed.**

060399.4 Project: **Neighborhood Plans: Aurora-Licton; Broadview, Bitter Lake, Haller Lake; North District**

Phase: Briefing

Presenters: Dotty DeCoster, Department of Neighborhoods

Time: 1 hr. (SDC Ref. # DC00039)

Aurora-Licton Neighborhood Plan

Primary objectives of the plan include:

- improved connections across Aurora Avenue
- reduce crime, involving the police department in the Design Review process

Potential CIP projects for the Aurora-Licton neighborhood include two possibilities: at the Wilson-Pacific site, SPU will be creating drainage improvements as yet undefined as part of the Densmore Drain project; redeveloping City Light property in the Aurora-Licton area to include parking for City Light employees and other uses including retail and housing to create a "residential urban village core".

Broadview-Bitter Lake-Haller Lake Neighborhood Plan

Major elements of the plan include the:

- creation of a Bitter Lake Village at Linden Avenue and 130th
- Bitter Lake Community Center enhancement
- utilize surplus City Light properties along Linden Avenue
- development of a bicycle circulation network
- enhance public open space and amenities
- commission and installation of public art

Potential CIP projects for the Broadview-Bitter Lake-Haller Lake neighborhood include a one-year IDT to study the situation of Linden Avenue N. between 128th and 145th. This area includes both the right-of-way and four or five City Light surplus properties as well a new potential recreational space that will be created when SPU lids the Bitter Lake Reservoir. Funding for the Linden Avenue Project ,the focus of this group's urban village, is undetermined, but some CIP funds may be required. More will be known in September of 2000 when the IDT reports back on their findings.

North District Neighborhood Plan

Primary elements of the plan include the:

- Lake City Civic Core Phase I & II Development
includes new fire station, new larger community center, new parking structure with sports courts, expanded library
- improved pedestrian links within Civic Core
- establish Green Streets in Civic Core
- pedestrian and bicycle route improvements
- street improvements to Lake City Way with enhanced pedestrian crossings

Potential CIP projects for the North District neighborhood include: Civic Core project, includes several projects especially adding additional space to the Lake City Library (in addition to the new library space); recreating Albert Davis Park for more active use, supplying parking, and creating a plaza.

For more information on these neighborhood plans contact Dotty DeCoster at (206) 684-8745 or
dotty.decoaster @ci.seattle.wa.us

Discussion:

Sundberg: I am encouraged by the planning efforts and the use of new approaches in these plans. I look forward to reviewing the CIP projects that are identified in the plan. I will be watching to see that the Lake City Library Plan includes the public plaza as requested by the neighborhood plan.

Action: **The Commission appreciates the briefing.**

060399.5 Project: **Merrill Gardens Post Alley Pedestrian Bridge**

Phase: Skybridge Request

Presenters: Karen Anderson-Bittenbender, Intracorp

David Hewitt, Hewitt Architects

Richard Reel, R. D. Merrill Company

Attendees: J. Andrew Miller, Intracorp

Paul Shema, Hewitt Architects

David Spiker, Hewitt Architects

Time: 1 hr. (SDC Ref. # DC00061)

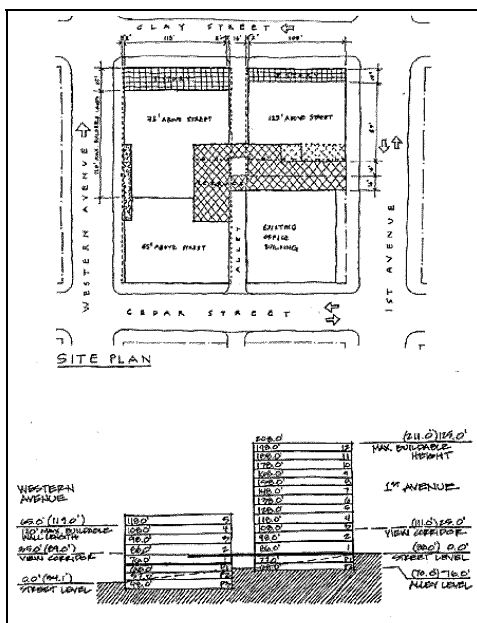
The R. D. Merrill Company is developing a senior housing facility, Merrill Gardens, in downtown Seattle between First and Western Avenue, and Clay and Cedar Streets. The development includes a senior housing facility on the west half of the block and a market-rate housing development on the northeast quarter of the block. The skybridge is requested as the preferred means of connecting the main floor of common rooms in the senior housing to the First Avenue transit stop. The skybridge will connect the senior housing to a new public plaza on First Avenue between the new market-rate development and an existing building.

The following four alternatives for the connection to First Avenue were explored:

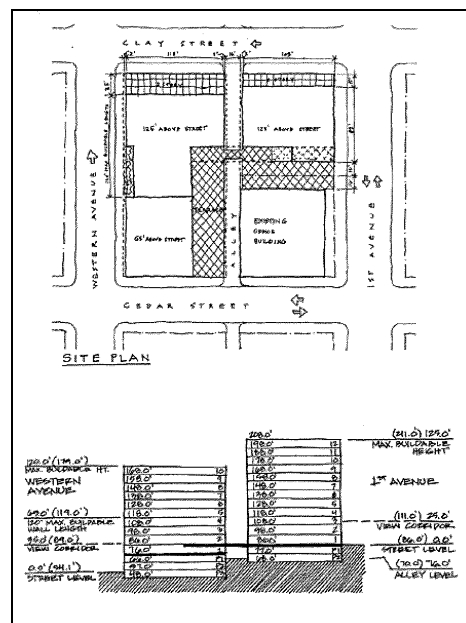
- street level connection up Clay or Cedar Streets — too steep
- at grade through alley with elevators to plaza — difficult pedestrian and service traffic issues
- tunnel below alley — not cost effective
- bridge over alley — alley remains open for use, direct pedestrian connection to plaza and First Avenue

Two schemes were developed with bridges over the alley. Scheme One includes two 16 foot wide bridges over the alley with an opening between them. The alley will be activated by van pick-up and drop-off for seniors, retail at the corners, and typical service access. The senior housing building would be 75 feet high on the north end and 65 feet high at the south end.

Scheme Two includes one bridge over the alley connecting the public plaza to the senior housing courtyard. The senior housing facility would be 125 feet high at the north end and drop to 65 feet high at the south end. The senior housing courtyard would extend along the alley to Cedar Street.



Scheme one plan & section



Scheme two plan & section

Both schemes include a large public plaza on First Avenue, an improved and relocated transit stop, retail, and a senior housing facility that will add a new demographic dimension to the neighborhood.

Discussion:

Sundberg: The plaza offers many opportunities for creating a quality public space. Will there be a strong architectural gesture at the end of the plaza?

Hewitt: Yes, the new buildings will frame the plaza with major architectural elements at the main Merrill Gardens entrance.

Miller: Placing a private skybridge over a public right-of-way is essentially a selfish act. This proposal mitigates the skybridge with generous public spaces and amenities. The types of retail will be important in the success of the public plaza.

Hewitt: Unlike most housing developments, the senior residents are around all day to activate the plaza and the retail. The retail establishments, probably located on the corners of the alley and Clay and Cedar Streets, will probably focus on the needs of senior residents.

Girvin: How will the alley be used?

Hewitt: The alley will be used for van loading and unloading, service access, parking garage access, and other typical uses.

Sundberg: Are you planning to integrate the First Avenue Arboretum Plan in the plaza landscape?

Anderson-Bittenbender: Yes, we are using the plan.

Foley: The skybridge request seems to be based on programmatic needs and easy access to the First Avenue transit stop.

Hewitt: That's correct. The senior housing program requires a large floor plate that is only possible on the west half of the development site. Residents are encouraged to get out and walk around. Since Western Avenue is a major arterial and not pedestrian friendly, direct access to First Avenue is very important. We are providing a generous public plaza for pedestrians to rest in.

Reel: Residents of our senior housing establishments like to walk, typically on provided trails. Given the urban setting of this development we will encourage residents to walk around the neighborhood, making connections to First Avenue even more important.

Hewitt: The market-rate housing, being developed on the northeast corner of the block, also presents the opportunity for children of senior housing residents to live nearby.

Layzer: I appreciate the early presentation. You have made very compelling arguments in support of the skybridge. The senior housing seems to be a public asset with the added benefit of a large public open space. However, I have some concerns regarding how the Design Commission can recommend approval or evaluate the proposal, based on the skybridge criteria and the demonstrated need for a skybridge, when it seems as though the site selection decision has lead to the need for the skybridge, rather than the City's zoning or street grid.

Hewitt: This type of project offers another demographic dimension to the neighborhood and introduces a new type of urban housing facility. The skybridge doesn't affect the desirability of the site for development, it allows for a special type of housing.

Anderson-Bittenbender: It is incredibly difficult to find half-blocks that can be developed in the downtown. This site was purchased by the R. D. Merrill Company two years ago.

Layzer: This project will bring a large amount of pedestrian activity and less traffic to the area, with the added public benefit of a generous open space.

Miller: The level of visual penetration into the block and the generosity of the public spaces seem to provide adequate public benefit for a skybridge that connects a senior housing development to First Avenue.

Sundberg: It is important for us to look at each skybridge request on a case-by-case basis.

Action: **The Commission appreciates the early opportunity to review the project and recommends conceptual approval with the following conditions.**

- **The proponent must return with further development of the character, architectural treatment, and amenities of the public plaza,**
- **further develop landscape features, art, integration of the First Avenue “Arboretum” landscaping plan, and**
- **continue working with the Design Review Board**

The Commission considers the provision of an urban senior housing development in the downtown core in conjunction with a generous public courtyard to be a public benefit that mitigates the skybridge. Conditional approval of this project should not be considered a precedent for other types of projects.

060399.6 Project: **Pritchard Wetlands Restoration Project**
 Phase: Update
 Previous Review: April 1, 1999
 Presenters: Charles Anderson, Anderson & Ray Landscape Architects
 Lisa Merke, Friends of Pritchard Beach
 Shannon Nichol, Anderson & Ray Landscape Architects
 Attendees: Sandy Fry, Starflower Foundation
 Pam Kliment, Parks & Recreation
 Ann Lennartz, Starflower Foundation
 Time: .75 hr. (SDC Ref. # DC00042)

In response to previous Commission comments the project manager and consultants made a thorough presentation of the Pritchard Beach wetland creation project. The project consists of paths and overlooks integrated into an artistic interpretation of a wetland landscape. The site was not a typical wetland, but was part of the lake bed when water levels were higher. The site will have a pond in the center with a small outlet to the lake. An experimental wet meadow will be planted with various seeds to see which are successful. The plantings are in the adolescent stage of settling out and should reach full maturity in approximately ten years.

The project will provide nearby schools with a working wetland for educational purposes. The wetland development has already resulted in an abundance of tree frogs, ducks, geese, bats, and wetland birds.

Discussion:

- Girvin:** This project has an interesting approach to wetland creation. I appreciate the artistic quality and variety of the landscape design. I would have enjoyed seeing the project develop and hope that similar projects can be brought in early on in their development. It is important for the Commission to understand how projects like this are integrated into their communities and how they might relate to other community projects. This project has set a precedent of high quality design for future landscape reclamation and restoration projects.
- Foley:** This is an exciting project. I like the creation of a community place for environmental education.
- Merke:** This project has received a lot of support from the community and the City.
- Sundberg:** What will the amphitheater be made of?
- Anderson:** It will have three low stone seat walls that form accessible terraces. It will be more of an informal gathering space than an amphitheater.
- Nichol:** The entire system of paths and overlooks will be handicapped accessible.
- Action:** **The Commission appreciates the creativity and care given to the design of this project. The Commission supports this unique approach toward wetland creation and encourages early involvement in future projects.**